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INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE

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STCL
TX18 EXCLUSIVE -- BALLOONS
BY: DARRELL GARWOOD

WASHINGTON- FEB. 11--(INS)--THE U. S. DECISION TO LAUNCH AIR FORCE WEATHER BALLOONS ALMOST AT THE BORDER OF THE SOVIET UNION WAS DELIBERATELY TAKEN AS ONE OF THE BIGGEST DIPLOMATIC GAMBLES EVER MADE BY A MAJOR GOVERNMENT.

IT WAS LEARNED BY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE TODAY THAT SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN FOSTER DULLES AND HIS BROTHER- ALLEN- WHO DIRECTS THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY- WERE PERSONALLY CONSULTED.

THEY GAVE THE GO-AHEAD FOR TAKING THE GAMBLE WHICH HAS BROUGHT ENSUING PROTESTS FROM RUSSIA AND HER IRON CURTAIN SATELLITES.

THE GAMBLE WAS BASED ON THE HOPE THE RUSSIANS WOULD THINK ENOUGH OF THEIR "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE" POSTURE TO IGNORE WEATHER BALLOONS DRIFTING OVER THEIR TERRITORY- AND MIGHT EVEN COOPERATE IN RETURNING SOME BALLOON EQUIPMENT- INCLUDING CAMERAS.

IF THEY DID- AN ENTERING WEDGE WOULD HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S PROPOSAL TO PERMIT MUTUAL AERIAL INSPECTION AS A SAFEGUARD AGAINST SURPRISE ATTACK. A FORM OF AERIAL INSPECTION TIED TO INTERNATIONAL WEATHER COOPERATION WOULD HAVE ALREADY STARTED.

"IT MAY SOUND INCREDIBLE NOW-" ONE OFFICIAL SAID- "BUT IT SEEMED A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME.

"THE RUSSIANS- SINCE WORLD WAR TWO- HAVE COOPERATED IN EXCHANGING WEATHER INFORMATION WITH US BY RADIO. THEY ARE COOPERATING IN THE INTERNATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL PROGRAM- WHICH HAS MANY WEATHER IMPLICATIONS. OUR BALLOON LAUNCHINGS WERE A WELL-ESTABLISHED- LEGITIMATE PROGRAM."

THE AIR FORCE PROGRAM KNOWN AS "MOBY DICK" HAS LAUNCHED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS MORE THAN 4,000 OF THE WEATHER BALLOONS- WHICH ARE MADE OF AN EXPANDABLE PLASTIC AND COST ABOUT $19-000 EACH.

THEY HAVE BEEN FLOATED MAINLY FROM THE U. S. BUT ALSO FROM JAPAN AND OKINAWA- WHERE PREVAILING WINDS BLOW THEM AWAY FROM SOVIET TERRITORY- AND, IN FAR-AWAY PLACES SUCH AS PANAMA- BRAZIL AND SCOTLAND.

THEY HYDROGEN-FILLED BALLOONS ARE 120 FEET IN DIAMETER WHEN THEY RISE AND CAN EXPAND TO 150 OR 160 FEET AT HIGH ALTITUDES. THE INSTRUMENTS THEY CARRY OFFICIALLY INCLUDE BOTH CAMERA AND RADIO EQUIPMENT "TO RECORD AND TELEMETER ATMOSPHERIC INFORMATION."

THE BASKET OF "BOX" CONTAINING THE INSTRUMENTS WEIGHS 400 POUNDS. THE DANGLING CARRIER HAS PARACHUTES TO GENTLY TO EARTH WHEN THE BALLOON DESTROYS ITSELF. THIS HAPPENS WHEN THE BALLOON DROPS BELOW 30-000 FEET OF ALTITUDE AFTER ITS ORIGINAL ASCENSION.

A DEVICE THAT AUTOMATICALLY DROPS BALLAST IF A BALLOON DESCENDS KEEPS THEM IN THE HIGHER ALTITUDES DURING THE SEVERAL DAYS THEY REMAIN ALOFT. THIS IS DESIGNED TO KEEP THEM OUT OF CIVILIAN BUT NOT OUT OF MILITARY AIRWAYS.

THE INFORMATION OBTAINED CONCERNS HIGH ALTITUDE JET STREAMS- WHICH BLOW AT HUNDREDS OF MILES AN HOUR- AND ABOUT "AIR FRONTAL SYSTEMS- STORM FORMATIONS- ELECTRO-MAGNETIC RADIATIONS AND RADIO PROPAGATION."

AN AIR FORCE RELEASE ON JAN. [illegible] ANNOUNCING THE PROSPECTIVE LAUNCHINGS IN EUROPE- IMPLIED THAT THE INFORMATION OBTAINED MIGHT HELP SOLVE PROBLEMS OF HURRICANES- [illegible] STORMS AND FLOODS IN THE U. S.

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CPYRGHT

"BY STUDYING THE COMPLETE GENERAL CIRCULATION AND PRESSURE PATTERNS- WE CAN LEARN MORE-" THE RELEASE SAID. "IT IS HOPED THAT THE INFORMATION WILL HELP EXPLAIN RECENT CLIMATIC CHANGES (HURRICANES- DUST STORMS- GALE WINDS AND FLOODS) WHICH HAVE AFFECTED THE U. S."

SEVERAL HUNDRED BALLOONS WERE OPTIMISTICALLY LAUNCHED IN GERMANY AND TURKEY BEFORE THE RUSSIANS PROTESTED. THE BALLOONS CARRIED REQUESTS IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES INCLUDING RUSSIAN FOR THE RETURN OF THE INSTRUMENTS.

U. S. DIPLOMATIC BACKTRACKING IS ATTRIBUTED TO THE FACT THAT SOME OF THE RUSSIAN CONTENTIONS CAN HARDLY BE DENIED. ALTHOUGH THE CAMERAS OFFICIALLY ARE TO PHOTOGRAPH "CLOUD FORMATIONS-" THEY CONCEIVABLY MIGHT GET A FAIRLY GOOD PICTURE OF THE GROUND.

JET PILOTS SAY, [redacted] AT [redacted] MILES AWAY FROM WHICH ALTITUDES. THE U. S. HAS EMPHASIZED- IN CONNECTION WITH MR. EISENHOWER'S INSPECTION PLAN- THAT A HIGH FLYING PLANE CAN CONTINUOUSLY PHOTOGRAPH A LAND STRIP 490 MILES WIDE.

THE RUSSIANS ARE ALSO STRESSING THAT THE BALLOONS ARE LAUNCHED BY AIR FORCE TEAMS- PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN THE MILITARY ASPECTS OF WEATHER- AND THAT THE BALLOONS CONCEIVABLY COULD DROP "ANYTHING FROM CHRISTMAS PRESENTS TO BACTERIOLOGICAL WEAPONS."

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